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What are they thinking?

Ok, so it is only a few thousand dollars in a multimillion dollar county budget. But when that budget is \$2.5 million in the red and the commissioners are recommending a 32 percent increase (\$3.3 million) in the amount to be raised by taxes, handing out pay increases suggest an out-of-touch mentality that rises to arrogance.

Yet that is precisely what a majority of state reps. of the county delegation did this week, going against a recommendation from the delegation's finance committee. In a meeting Monday, the full delegation first voted 11-2 to give raises of 1.5 percent to the county attorney, sheriff and registrar of deeds, with Peter Franklin, D-Newport, and Larry Converse, D-Claremont dissenting. It followed that absurd action by giving the three commissioners — who did not even ask for a raise — and treasurer, the same increases. These are the same commissioners overseeing the disaster that has become the county budget. Franklin, Brenda Ferland, I-Charlestown, Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport, and Jay Phinizy, D-Acworth, wisely voted against the increases.

"The county is in a very serious financial condition," Franklin said at the meeting. "To hold the line on salaries for elected officials is both the prudent and proper thing for this delegation to do."

We could not have said it better.

But instead of being prudent, a majority of state reps. chose to be reckless. As we said, it amounts to less than \$5,000 over two years but the vote is symbolic of how some state reps. are simply out of touch with their constituents' struggle in the face of high gas and heating oil prices and a very uncertain economy. Private business facing the sort of deficits the county has would not survive long by giving raises when the company is swimming in red ink.

The county finances have been poorly managed for years and the taxpayers have been, and will continue to foot the bill. Why rub it in more by granting raises when the money, even a few thousand dollars, is not there?